

## 2007 ANNUAL REPORT

Dear Governor Rounds:

The South Dakota Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired (SBVI) respectfully submits our Annual Report for 2007. The mission of the Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired is to provide individualized rehabilitation services that result in optimal employment and independent living outcomes for citizens who are blind or visually impaired. The Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired has collaborated with the Division of SBVI to ensure the best possible services for citizens who are blind or visually impaired.

To date, the Board has played an important role in strategic planning that will help to define future priorities for the Division. The Division's goals for the upcoming three year period focus on improving SBVI services, increasing outreach efforts in an attempt to reach everyone who needs our services, and effectively serving those who are blind or visually impaired and have unique needs with specialized services.

Throughout this report, I trust that you will find evidence of the quality work that the Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired is involved in. The data, successful outcomes, and success stories illustrate the fact that SBVI is helping to positively change the lives of South Dakotans who are blind or visually impaired.

The Board of SBVI is committed to promoting services for individuals who are blind or visually impaired, and we appreciate your support in that challenge.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rita Weber

Rita Weber, Chair  
Board of SBVI

CC: Edward Anthony, Acting Commissioner  
Rehabilitation Services Administration  
Sue Rankin-White, RSA State Liaison

## 2007 ANNUAL REPORT

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

South Dakota SBVI experienced a year of exciting events in 2007. In conjunction with the Board of SBVI, activities promoting independence and employment of citizens who are blind or visually impaired took place across the state.

The year kicked off with a reintroduction of the *VISIONS* Newsletter which received rave reviews and will continue on a biannual basis. The Board of SBVI implemented a mentoring program to provide support from experienced individuals who are blind to those with recent vision loss. Many members of the Board volunteered to be available to share their experiences and to guide individuals who are new to blindness or low vision.

Public relations are an ongoing priority of the Board which implemented a logo contest to identify an agency logo that would represent the values of the Division and the Board. A former consumer was the contest winner with a logo that addresses the values we strive to promote including: service, removal of barriers, and independence. Closed Circuit Televisions were featured at the Department of Human Services display during Capital for a Day events across the state promoting assistive technology and the services provided by SBVI.

The Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) conducted an on site monitoring review during 2007. Conference calls, e-mail correspondence and video conferences were conducted prior to the visit the week of June 11<sup>th</sup>. Board members participated in the review offering their insights to RSA. Ongoing activities will address recommendations that came from the review with the Board Strategic Planning and Policy Development committee taking a lead role in recommending priorities and activities to be approved by the full board.

Members of the Board of SBVI serve on a volunteer basis to promote the mission of the Division to better the lives of those we serve. Their commitment to improving services and educating society on the capabilities of citizens who are blind or visually impaired ensures that lives are improved and doors are opened.

Last, but certainly not least, we wish to acknowledge the over 2,000 citizens who participated in SBVI programs to increase their independence through skills training, communication access and employment. Input from consumer satisfaction surveys, focus groups and public meetings led to improving services for those needing assistance in the future.

Gaye Mattke, Director

## VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM

The mission of the SBVI vocational rehabilitation program is to provide individualized rehabilitation services that result in optimal employment outcomes for citizens who are blind or visually impaired.

- 493 individuals were served through the SBVI Vocational Rehabilitation Program during Federal Fiscal Year 2007 compared to 473 in Federal Fiscal Year 2006.
- 100 individuals who were blind or visually impaired were successfully rehabilitated through the vocational rehabilitation program in Federal Fiscal Year 2007. SBVI provided services that assisted these individuals to obtain or retain employment. 98% of these individuals had significant disabilities.
- The average hourly wage for individuals who were successfully rehabilitated and placed in competitive employment through the vocational rehabilitation program was \$9.79 an hour and the annual income was \$17,027.35.

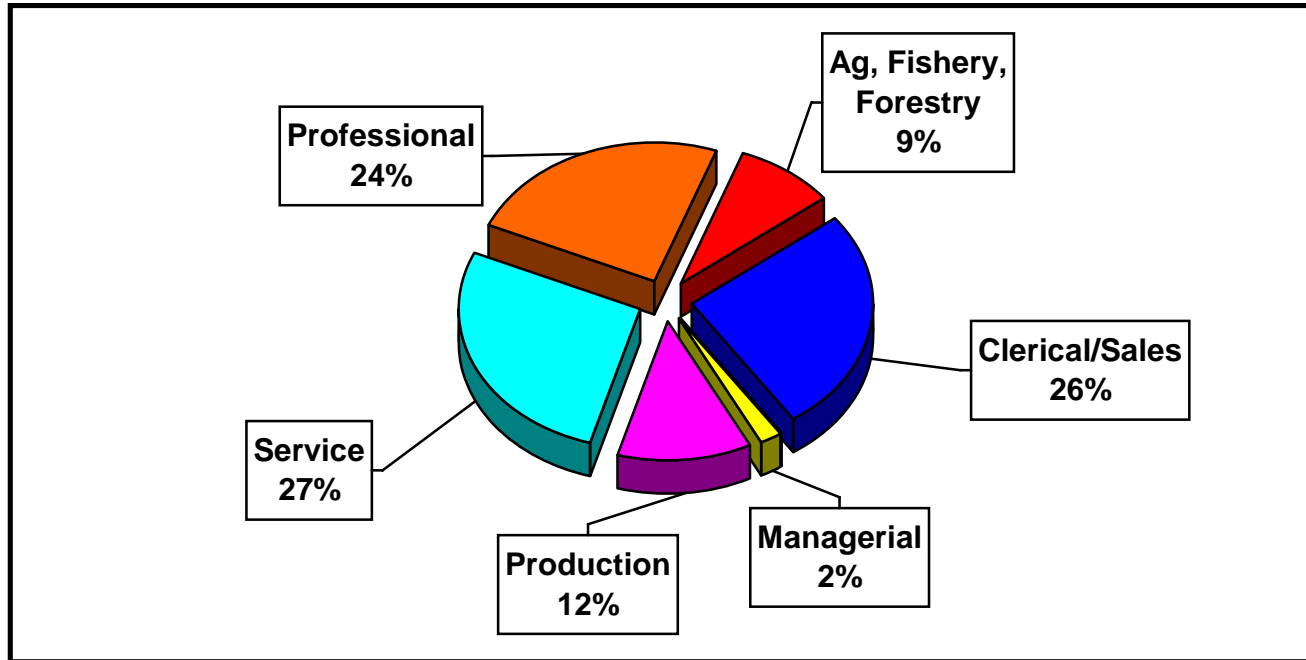
### SBVI Vocational Rehabilitation Caseload Summary

	FY 07	FY 06	FY 05	FY 04	FY 03
Individuals applying for services	192	181	192	186	166
Individuals not eligible or interested	30	21	33	25	35
Eligibility decisions	160	151	162	162	137
<b>Individuals rehabilitated successfully</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>65</b>
Individuals who received services but were closed unsuccessfully	36	33	34	26	18
Individuals eligible but closed with no services provided	24	22	14	12	12

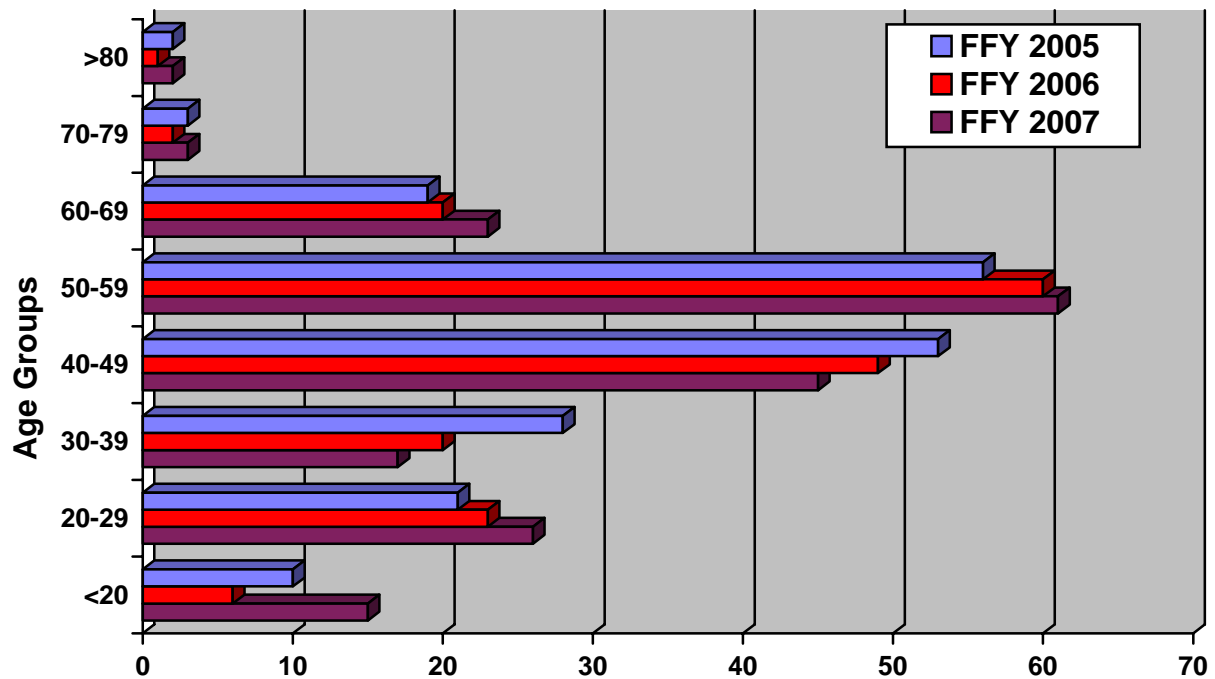
Additional Data on Successful Closures	
Average age at application	45 yrs, 318 days
Average age at closure	47 yrs, 270 days
Average days from application to closure	1 year, 317 days
Average cost of a successful closure	\$6,201.43

# VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM

## Occupations of Individuals Closed Successfully

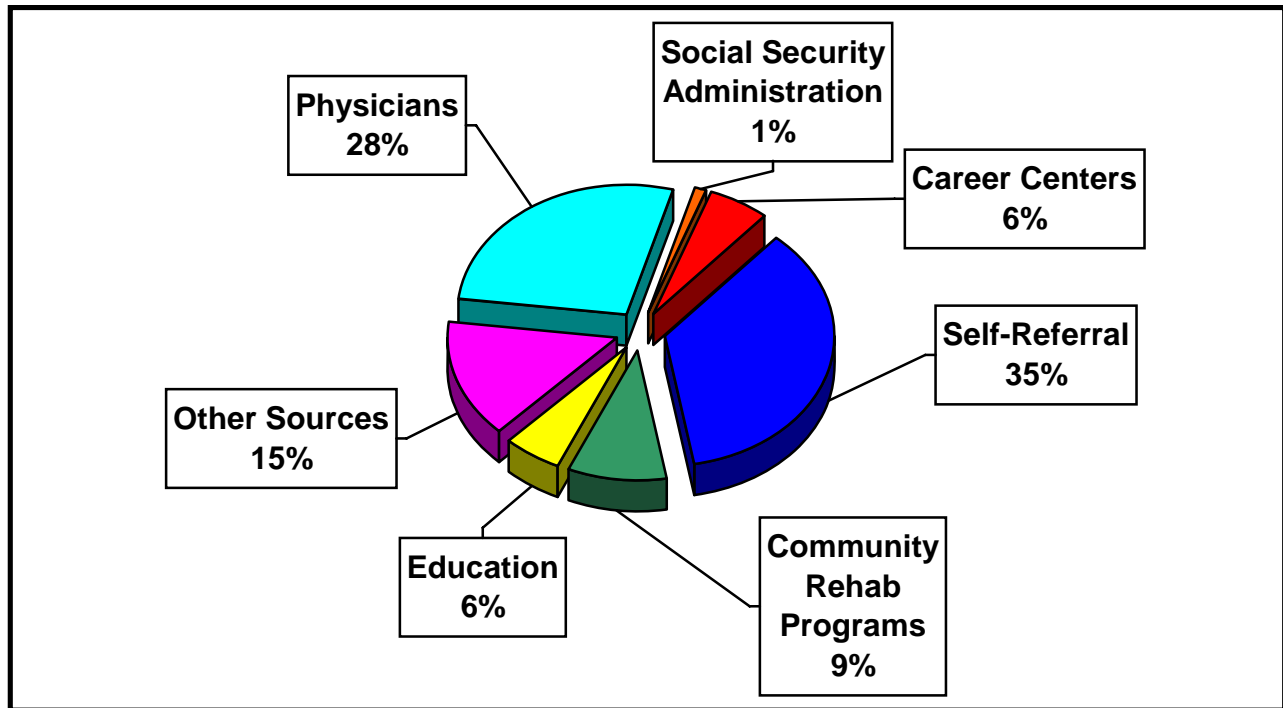


## Number of Applicants per Age Group



## VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM

**Source of Referrals for Applicants**



### Benefit-Cost Ratio Analysis

#### Benefit-Cost Ratio Based on Consumer Income

For every \$1 spent, rehabilitated consumers will experience an increase in earnings of \$3.49. This increase to consumers' income is not only for the first year but continues year after year. As their economic independence grows, individuals with disabilities are empowered to participate as equal members of the community.

#### Benefit-Cost Ratio Based on Consumer Payback

For every \$1 spent, rehabilitated consumers will pay back \$0.70 in taxes. Contributions of rehabilitated consumers will positively impact the state's economic system as they become tax paying citizens as opposed to beneficiaries of the system. Individuals who were formerly supported by other resources can now take an active role in contributing to the economy after their successful rehabilitation.

## VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM

### SBVI Consumer Satisfaction Survey – Fiscal Year 2007

The consumer satisfaction survey is a requirement of the Rehabilitation Act. This survey is used to review and analyze the effectiveness of the public Vocational Rehabilitation Program's consumer satisfaction with VR services provided by the State VR Agency.

The consumer satisfaction survey is categorized into three areas:

1. Satisfaction of Informed Choice
2. Satisfaction with Services
3. Satisfaction of Employment Outcomes

Respondents are given five different possible responses for each of six statements: 1=Strongly Agree, 2=Agree, 3 = Neutral, 4=Disagree, 5=Strongly Disagree.

#### Indicator 3.1

**Of all individuals receiving VR services, the percentage that are satisfied with their own level of participation in decision-making throughout the development and implementation of their Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE).**

**Target Group:** Surveys were sent to individuals 6 months after they have started their first IPE.

	Survey Statement	Average Rating	# Responses
1	My Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) counselor explained my options in choosing my employment goal.	1.57	21
2	My VR counselor explained my options to develop the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) myself, or receive assistance with developing my employment plan.	1.76	21
3	My VR counselor explained to me what services were available.	1.57	21
4	I was informed of my right to contact the Client Assistance Program (CAP) for help in resolving differences and my right to appeal any dispute.	1.81	21
5	Information was presented to me in an understandable manner.	1.52	21
6	I was a full partner in the decision making process for my goal, rehabilitation plan, selection of services and provider.	1.38	21

### Indicator 3.2

Of all individuals receiving services, the percentage who are satisfied with --

- (1) The appropriateness, timeliness, quality, and extent of the services they received;
- (2) Their interactions with the providers of those services; and
- (3) Their interactions with VR counselors and other Division Staff.

**Target Group:** Surveys were sent to individuals who have been in the rehabilitation process for a period of time and have received over \$1,500 of services.

	Survey Statement	Average Rating	# Responses
1	I feel that the amount and type of services in my plan are adequate to meet my employment goal.	1.17	12
2	Services from my Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) counselor were provided in a prompt manner.	1.25	12
3	The vocational guidance and quality of counseling received from my VR Counselor assisted me in my rehabilitation process.	1.17	12
4	I would recommend the services from VR to a friend.	1.08	12
5	I am satisfied with the services I received from my service provider.	1.17	12
6	The services from my provider were accessible to me.	1.17	12

### Indicator 3.3

Of individuals who obtain employment, the percent who are satisfied with their outcome.

**Target Group:** Surveys were sent to individuals who have been recently closed as successfully rehabilitated.

	Survey Statement	Average Rating	# Responses
1	I am working in the field that I chose as my employment goal.	2.15	13
2	I am satisfied with the earnings I receive.	2.38	13
3	I am satisfied with the employment I obtained as a result of Vocational Rehabilitation Services.	2.08	13
4	I am satisfied with the level of benefits I receive through my job.	2.31	13
5	I like the people and environment where I am working.	1.85	13
6	I feel the services provided by VR were necessary to obtain my employment.	2.31	13



## VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SUCCESS STORIES

Following are a few examples of individuals who worked with SBVI and succeeded in obtaining their employment. Actual names were not used in order to protect confidentiality.

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Annette applied with SBVI shortly after being diagnosed with diabetes and diabetic retinopathy. Annette was employed as a teacher at the time of application but did not have medical insurance. SBVI helped with medical procedures in an attempt to correct her vision loss, but some of her lost vision was unrecoverable. Annette was distraught at first, but she worked with her counselor and the staff at the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind to gain confidence and learn the skills that were necessary in order for her to remain independent and continue teaching.

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Angela was attending college to obtain a degree in nursing at the time of application. She was single, worked part-time, and had a severely disabled child. She had one year left in her academic program, however due to her vision loss she would not have been able to complete her degree without eye surgery. Angela had no medical insurance to cover the cost of the surgery. Angela's VR counselor provided counseling and guidance as well as assisted with the cost of surgery. Angela was able to complete her nursing degree and obtained a position making \$18 per hour with benefits.

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Terry began with vocational rehabilitation at age fifteen. Terry, with strong support from his parents and counselor, explored several career opportunities before settling on computer programming. With Terry's significant vision loss, various assistive technology devices and software allowed him to work efficiently on a computer. Terry graduated with an associates' degree from technical school and is now employed full time with benefits at \$28,000 annually. At closure Terry reported that his employment was going better than even he had hoped.

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Shelly's vision loss and other complications from diabetes caused her to doubt she could even return to work. Her employment goal was to be a cafeteria worker. Due to the level of severity of her disabilities, Shelly was only able to work part-time. With the help of her counselor, a job developer, and some low vision aids recommended by the rehabilitation center, Shelly was able to secure part time employment at a local hospital cafeteria making \$700 monthly. Both Shelly and her new employer are extremely pleased.

## INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAM

Blindness or low vision affects 3.3 million Americans age 40 and over, or one in 28 according to the April 2004, Archives of Ophthalmology. Additional reports confirm that low vision and blindness increase significantly with age, particularly in people over age 65. People 80 years of age and older currently make up eight percent of the population, but account for 69% of blindness.

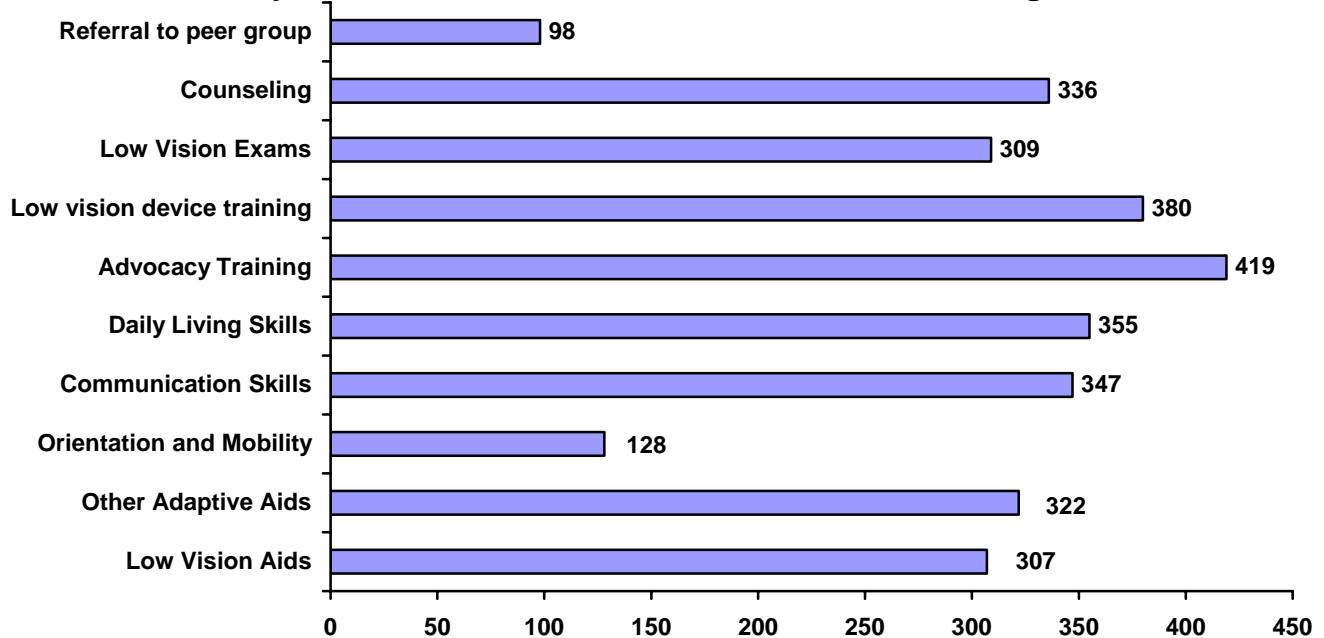
Since it's inception in the mid 1950's, the goal of the Independent Living Blind Program (ILB) has been to serve older individuals who are experiencing vision loss or blindness in all areas of South Dakota and assist them to remain independent in their homes and communities. In FFY 2007, 90% of the individuals served resided in their own private residence-apartment or home. In a survey conducted of individuals served in 2007, 16% of respondents stated that they had considered living in a nursing home but due to services that resulted in improved skills to compensate for vision loss, they were able to remain in their own homes.

- The Independent Living Blind Program provided services to 475 elderly blind individuals in FFY 2007 compared to 502 in FFY 2006. Staff successfully closed 252 individuals in FFY 2007 compared to 252 in FFY 2006. Services were provided in all areas of independent living: home management which includes activities of daily living, communication skills, low vision skills, and orientation and mobility. Macular degeneration was the major cause of vision loss in 68% of these individuals.
- In addition to providing services to the elderly blind, the Independent Living Blind Program provided services to 31 individuals under the age of 55 who required independent living skills training. Other causes of blindness such as retinitis pigmentosa or hemianopsia (caused by stroke), were the major reason for vision loss for 54% of the individuals in this age group, as opposed to 10% for the individuals over the age of 55.

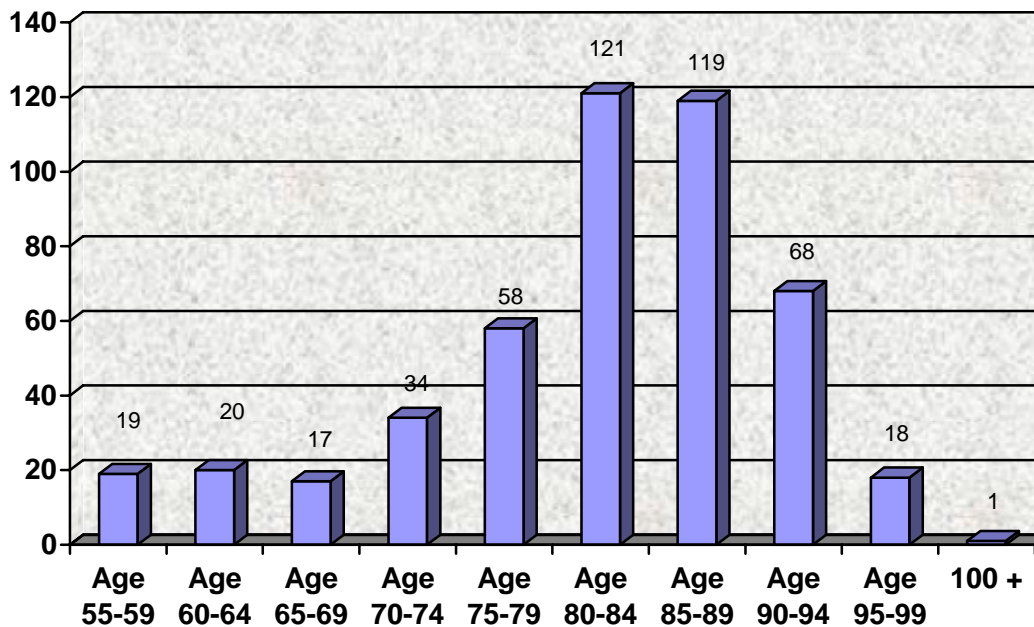
Older blind peer support groups offer a valuable opportunity to talk with others, share common concerns, frustrations and stories. Peer support services to elderly individuals with vision loss are available through 19 groups currently in place across the state. The majority of the peer support groups are led by volunteers who meet monthly throughout the year in settings agreed to by the groups. Guest speakers may be invited to present on a variety of topics or members share articles and their experiences.

## INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAM

### Primary Services Provided to ILB Individuals over the age of 55



### Age Range of ILB Individuals Served in FFY 07



## INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAM SUCCESS STORY

(Submitted by Chelle Hart, Sioux Falls Rehabilitation Teacher)

I just finished working with Clara, an eighty eight year-old lady whom I had met in December of 2006. I'm sure that Clara would say that she is nothing special, but I saw great change in her attitude and abilities during the time we worked together.

Clara liked to take walks outdoors but didn't do it much any more for fear of falling. We worked with a white support cane, and now she takes it with her whenever she leaves the house.

Clara attended a low vision evaluation at SDRC. That helped her to determine what magnifiers and other low vision aids would help her at home. She uses a stand magnifier and a pocket magnifier for tasks such as reading prices at the store, setting her thermostat, and deciphering recipes on boxed mixes and canned foods.

She is an avid Twins baseball fan. The TV Max glasses help her to see the games on television and to keep track of the Twins with their winning and losing streaks. A Dazor lamp allows Clara to read her newspaper and to polish her nails. Clara says that all of these low vision aids have helped her to do more on her own and depend less on her family.

A bold timer and low vision measuring cups and spoons have helped Clara to continue doing some cooking. We worked on non-visual ways of pouring and measuring ingredients. She told me that it is nice to be able to do some of these things again on her own. Learning about the use of contrast helped Clara to get more from her residual vision. One day when I stopped to visit Clara, she had made cookies and wanted to share them. She told me that baking was something she had enjoyed but had given up because of her vision loss. The cookies were great!

Clara probably would not say that she is special or even that she is necessarily a "success story", but this rehabilitation teacher believes that Clara is a much more independent person and much happier for it.

## BUSINESS ENTERPRISE PROGRAM

The Business Enterprise Program (BEP) is an employment program managed by Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired. This program was developed as a result of the federal Randolph-Sheppard Act, which gives priority for food service and vending service in federal buildings and facilities to qualified blind vendors. Within state government, there is a policy providing that priority be given to the BEP for vending and food service in state owned or run facilities when appropriate. In addition, all of the vending at the rest areas in South Dakota along interstates 29 and 90 are contracted out with a significant amount of the income used to help with expenses of operating the program.

The South Dakota BEP has vending facilities in the following communities:

CITY	FACILITY	FACILITY TYPE
Aberdeen	Federal Building	Snack bar
Aberdeen	USPS Sorting Facility	Vending
Huron	Federal Building and Dakota Central	Vending
Pierre	Kneip Building	Snack Bar/Coffee Shop
Pierre	Becker Hanson Building	Snack Bar/Coffee Shop
Rapid City	County Court House	Coffee Shop
Sioux Falls	EROS Data Center	Cafeteria
Sioux Falls	USPS Facilities	Vending
Yankton	Federal Prison	Vending

Most of the facilities also have vending routes that consist of several state and federal government buildings. The Yankton Federal Prison consists of both inmate debit cards and cash vending. Six individuals currently manage all of the locations with some vendors managing multiple facilities.

## BUSINESS ENTERPRISE PROGRAM

Following is a breakdown of sales and net profits earned by BEP vendors in 2007.

1) Gross Sales (Total Income)	<b>\$747,802.00</b>
2) Merchandise Purchases (total cost of goods sold)	<b>\$410,666.00</b>
3) Gross Profit (line 1-2)	<b>\$337,138.00</b>
4) Total Operating Expenses	<b>\$223,752.00</b>
5) Net Income Before Set aside (line 3-4)	<b>\$113,385.00</b>
6) Vending Machine & Other Income	<b>\$32,857.00</b>
7) Net Proceeds (line 5+6)	<b>\$146,240.00</b>
8) Funds Set Aside	<b>\$22,470.00</b>
9) Net Profit to Vendors (line 7-8)	<b>\$123,772.00</b>

### Business Enterprise Program Success Story

**Coping With a Bad Situation** - As reported by the Capital Journal on Monday, July 9, 2007.

Mayhlon Satrang was married with two kids, managing the grocery department of a Super Valu in Britton when suddenly the world started to get dimmer. In Feb. 1974, he was diagnosed with two inoperable benign tumors on his optic nerves. By 1976, he had lost his eyesight completely. "The scariest thought I had, was how do I take care of my family?"

Not long after the diagnosis, when it was apparent that his sight loss was inevitable, Satrang went to the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind for job training and placement, and in 1975 he was running a coffee shop at the Pierre Regional Airport. His wife Cheryl landed a job as a purchasing assistant for the Department of Social Services where she has worked for the last 31 years.

Satrang took over his current business in the basement of the Becker-Hansen building in 1976, which also includes several vending machines in other state and federal buildings in Pierre. He has an employee who stocks most of the time.

## **Business Enterprise Program Success Story (Continued)**

Early morning is his favorite time of day and after he gets to work he starts setting out the muffins and rolls, makes the coffee and prepares the ingredients for the breakfast sandwiches he is about to make for the state employees. The English muffin, egg, and sausage sandwiches are a popular item on his menu. "I'm a half way decent cook. We make different lunches every day, sometimes my employees cook them, but I make a lot of them." said Satrang.

One gets the feeling from Satrang that he wouldn't change anything about his life. In fact he says that losing his sight was a blessing. "In the long run this may have been the best thing that could have happened; my wife and I have better jobs than we did in Britton. We love Pierre and now our daughters live in Rapid City so we can visit them all the time." said Satrang.

Retirement isn't far off for Satrang; December 31, 2008 is the date he has set. He will be 62 next year, and he wants to do some traveling. Satrang has a sister in Florida who has season tickets for the NFL's Tampa Bay Buccaneers that he wants to help her use. "They are great seats, right on the 50-yard line." said Satrang. He said they will spend a few weeks with her every year.

Going blind in the middle of life would not be an easy development for anyone, yet Satrang will have you believe it wasn't that hard. "The good Lord always gave me skills to survive. Some of this has come easy for me." said Satrang. "It was a shock when they told me that I was going blind. I was going blind and that was it, I could sit in a corner and hate it – or I could accept it and enjoy life."

It is obvious which route he chose. Satrang exudes that same attitude to all that encounter him every day in his small coffee shop in the basement of one of Pierre's many state buildings. And though everyone will not have a chance to meet Satrang, those who do walk away with a smile on their faces and a laugh in their hearts.

## REHABILITATION CENTER FOR THE BLIND

The mission statement of the South Dakota Rehabilitation Center for the Blind (SDRC): *Provide assessment and training to individuals with visual impairments and/or other disabilities so they may enhance their independence in their home, work, and community.*

The SD Rehabilitation Center for the Blind teaches individuals who are blind or visually impaired the skills necessary to live and work independently. Employment figures for persons with disabilities show that only 32% of people with disabilities of working age (18-64) work full or part-time. Employment is the key to economic security for Americans. It's everyone's responsibility to break down the attitudinal and environmental barriers and open our doors for people with disabilities. We must all think "ability" instead of "disability" and encourage others to do the same.

### **Program Highlight**

Transition Week was a highlight for SDRC in 2007. This summer program for teens is designed to foster career goals and introduce skills for independent living. The students participated in classes at SDRC where they learned skills such as money management, check writing, cooking, computer use with assistive technology, home maintenance, and mobility training. The vocational team emphasized career activities to include job searches, interviewing techniques, appropriate job etiquette and the education and experience needed for a variety of careers. Tours at Daktronics, the University of Sioux Falls, EROS Data Center, Central States Manufacturing, and Show Place Cabinetry allowed students the opportunity to learn about employment options. Additionally, the students were encouraged by motivational speakers who talked about their experiences of going to college and working with vision loss.

Evening activities allowed the students to experience leisure and community. Students participated in a beep baseball game, shopping at the Empire Mall, Hummer rides at the local dealership's test track, and pizza night. They also attended the 17th anniversary Americans with Disabilities Act picnic which featured speakers and live music. During the wrap-up, the students shared how their experiences at transition week made an impact on their career exploration, skills of blindness, and outlook on life.

Students expressed enthusiasm about the activities and their opportunity to learn skills with peers who had a variety of disabilities and varying degrees of vision loss. Next year's transition week will be planned with consideration of the student's suggestions for activities and learning opportunities.



## REHABILITATION CENTER FOR THE BLIND

SDRC served 36 consumers in skills of blindness training in FY 2007 to include computers utilizing assistive technology, orientation and mobility, home management, and communications. An additional 11 consumers were served in the summer youth transition program. The average length of training was 6 ½ weeks. Of the 36 consumers, 11 individuals attended 10 or more weeks.

The Prevention of Blindness program provides equipment to volunteers who screen children and adults for vision loss. In FY 2007 this program screened 1,825 adults of which 473 were referred to eye care professionals. The SDRC also operates a clinic that provides low vision evaluations; 63 individuals were evaluated for low vision services in 2007. In addition to evaluations, the low vision therapist provided training and informational services to 14 individuals.

South Dakota Vocational Resources is a specialized employment unit within SDRC. This unit works closely with each individual and their referring counselor to find employment that meets each individual's needs. Although this unit specializes in working with people who are blind or visually impaired, they also provide employment services to individuals with other types of disabilities.

Job placement consultants help individuals with disabilities find and engage in gainful employment. They also train students on interviewing, job seeking and job retention skills. Job placement staff worked with 57 individual in 2007. Of those 31 were placed in employment and successfully maintained that position for a minimum of 90 days. A variety of positions are sought and placements ranged from a daycare employee to a professional supervisor. Two job placement challenges are finding jobs with advancement potential and finding positions for people who are blind or visually impaired with limited skills. It is critical for a person who is blind to have exemplary work skills in order to stand out and be viewed as capable of performing well in a job.

The Employment Skills Training Program evaluates the consumer's work habits and vocational skills for appropriate job matches. Emphasis is placed on learning employer expectations and preparing people to learn the skills necessary to compete in the labor market. Training helps identify strengths and abilities in a realistic way to determine appropriate employment goals. This program is also an excellent way to prepare for college when consumers determine they need more education. Seventy three individuals were served in 2007.

## REHABILITATION CENTER FOR THE BLIND

### SDRC Summary of Consumers Served

<b>SDRC Service</b>	<b>FY 2007</b>	<b>FY 2006</b>
Skills of Blindness	<b>36</b>	<b>41</b>
Employment Specialists	<b>57</b>	<b>67</b>
Transition Students	<b>11</b>	<b>0</b>
Low Vision Clinics	<b>63</b>	<b>61</b>
Employment Skills Training	<b>73</b>	<b>97</b>
<b>Total Served</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>266</b>

### REHAB CENTER FOR THE BLIND SUCCESS STORY

Duane had been visually impaired most of his life due to glaucoma. When an accident caused him to lose additional vision he was told he couldn't return to work at the recycling plant because of the risk of losing his remaining sight. Duane was afraid to go out of his house and consequently became isolated from friends and family. With mounting medical bills and no insurance coverage, he became frustrated. Duane didn't believe he could work because of his vision loss, but trusted his Rehabilitation Counselor, Steve Kelsey, who told him if he would learn the skills of blindness he could be independent and return to work. Duane struggled with depression and feelings of hopelessness, but despite this, when his rehabilitation counselor suggested he attend the SD Rehabilitation Center for the Blind in Sioux Falls, Duane decided to go.

Duane recalls the trip to the SDRC with Steve and how they stopped along the way so Steve could see another consumer. While Duane was waiting in the car, he thought, "If Steve could find a job for an individual in a town of 300 people, I surely could find a job in my town." He decided then that he was going to make the best of the training and work hard.

Duane says, "The Center taught me how to use a computer. Before skills of blindness training, I had absolutely no computer experience. Each class helped me: for example, communication class taught me how to use the telephone to access the newspaper and use directory assistance. Orientation and Mobility kept me alive, because I learned that cars and trucks don't stop just because I have a white cane! Home management class helped me get organized, which helped me at work also. Computer class and employment skills training are why I am working full-time with benefits at Wyndham Motels Inc. I practiced interview questions, developed a resume and learned job etiquette which helped prepare me for this job. It is because of the SDRC that I am employed today."

**BOARD OF SERVICE TO THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED****BOARD MEMBERS**

The Rehabilitation Act as amended defines Board nominations and appointments as follows: *Members of the Council shall be appointed by the Governor. The Governor shall select members after soliciting recommendations from representatives of organizations representing a broad range of individuals with disabilities and organizations interested in individuals with disabilities. In selecting members, the Governor shall consider, to the greatest extent practicable, the extent to which minority populations are represented on the Council.*

To meet with this mandate, the Division and Board solicit membership nominations from the National Federation of the Blind of South Dakota, South Dakota Association of the Blind and other entities involved with vocational rehabilitation and issues pertinent to citizens who are blind or visually impaired. Nominations are submitted to the Governor's office for consideration for appointment.

<b><u>Name/Representation</u></b>	<b><u>Appointment Date</u></b>	<b><u>Term End Date</u></b>
Rita Weber (Chair) Business, Blind, Former Consumer	09/23/05	06/30/08
Kyle Kircher Client Assistance Program	03/14/03	06/30/08
Wesley Scholl Disability Advocacy Group	09/16/05	06/30/09
Dave Miller Blind, Business	07/21/06	06/30/09
Gaye Mattke, Ex Officio SBVI Director		Pleasure of the Governor
Steve Kelsey, Ex Officio VR Counselor, Blind	11/22/05	Pleasure of the Governor
Owen Keith Bundy (Former Chair) Business, Former Consumer, Disability Advocacy Group, Blind	01/28/02	06/30/09
Ed Pinkman Former Consumer, Disability Advocacy Group, Blind	03/03/05	06/30/10

<b>BOARD OF SERVICE TO THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED</b>
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<u><b>Name/Representation</b></u>	<u><b>Appointment Date</b></u>	<u><b>Term End Date</b></u>
Larry Wheeting Business, Blind, Former Consumer	09/19/05	06/30/08
Sue Birrenkott Parent Training & Information Center	01/28/02	06/30/07
Pat Czerny Community Rehabilitation Program	01/28/02	06/30/07
Angela Boddicker State Education Agency	10/20/03	06/30/09
Gayle Aamold Blind, Former Consumer	11/05/03	06/30/09
Dennis White Shield 121 Project Representative	10/21/03	06/30/09
Mike Klimisch Business, Former Consumer, Blind, Disability Advocacy Group	12/30/04	06/30/10
Deanne Curran Parent Training & Information Center, Parent of Children w/ Disabilities	07/10/07	06/30/10
Charles Fullenkamp Community Rehabilitation Program	07/10/07	06/30/10

## **BOARD ACTIVITIES**

**Meetings** - As stipulated by the bylaws, the Board meets as often as necessary, as determined by the Chairperson in cooperation with the Director of SBVI, but at least four times per year. Meetings during the report period were held on the following dates and locations:

December 8, 2006  
Pierre, SD

April 12, 2007  
Sioux Falls, SD

June 22, 2007  
Pierre, SD

September 28, 2007  
Ft. Pierre, SD

**BOARD OF SERVICE TO THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED****BOARD COMMITTEES**

**Executive Committee** - The Executive Committee consists of the Board Chair, Vice Chair and Member at Large. This committee handles decisions between regularly scheduled board meetings and other activities assigned by the Board Chair. The Executive Committee also serves as the nominations committee by assisting with preparing for annual board officer elections by contacting qualified candidates and determining their interest in serving as a board officer. The Nominations Committee also assists with soliciting potential qualified candidates to fill board vacancies.

**Strategic Planning and Policy Development Committee** - The role of this committee is to provide input for strategic planning and policy development. This committee of volunteers has been instrumental in developing the division's strategic plan for the upcoming three years. All recommendations are discussed by the full board and acted upon at quarterly Board meetings.

**Public Relations Committee** - This committee's focus is to improve public relations and disseminate information about the services offered by SBVI. The public relations committee also coordinates board-supported activities such as National Disability Employment Awareness month in October. The committee prepares nominations for the annual Governor's awards luncheon for consideration by the full Board.

The Board Chair appoints other committees on an "as needed" or ad hoc basis. Ad hoc committees address bylaw updates, special initiatives and priorities based on consumer input, and federal and state priorities.

**BOARD PRIORITIES**

**Transition Services for Youth who are Blind or Visually Impaired** The Board of SBVI supported the annual Summer Transition Program that was held on July 23-27, 2007 at the SD Rehabilitation Center for the Blind. The one-week session included visits by Board members who served as mentors by sharing their experiences about growing up with vision loss.

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**Mentoring** - The Board of SBVI participated in initiatives to implement mentoring of individuals with recent vision loss. They suggested that mentoring should not only be for transition age consumers but also for those who experience vision loss later in life.

Mentoring activities included Board Member David Miller speaking at the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind on Mentoring Day (October 17<sup>th</sup>). Ongoing activities included Board members volunteering to be mentors and development of procedures to recruit mentors and match them with consumers who would benefit from working with a mentor.

**RSA Monitoring Review** - Board members participated in stakeholder conference calls as part of preparations for the Rehabilitation Services Administration on site monitoring review in June of 2007. The board will provide input into activities to address the RSA monitoring plan to address: Increasing employment outcomes for transition youth by at least 1% per year; Improving the quality of employment outcomes to achieve wages that are comparable to the state average wage; and, develop a quality assurance plan which integrates all activities and measures areas for improvement.

**Public Meetings** - Public meetings are held on an annual basis to solicit input into the State Plan as well as priorities to improve services to citizens who are blind or visually impaired. The Board of SBVI identifies appropriate topics for discussion, makes recommendations on meeting locations and Board members facilitate each of the meetings. Meetings are hosted by consumer organizations of the blind. Sites for public meetings in 2007 included Pierre and Sioux Falls. The Pierre meeting was held in conjunction with the state convention of the National Federation of the Blind.

In addition to the SBVI public meetings, the Board supported a joint public meeting with the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation, Statewide Independent Living Council, and Freedom to Work Leadership Council in Aberdeen. The public meeting was held after a seminar for employers, providers and consumers. The format included small groups with questions for employers, consumers or providers of services for individuals with disabilities.

**Focus Groups** - Focus groups were held based on Board recommendations to use this approach as another method of soliciting input of individuals served. There were four sessions for the Focus Groups, two in Rapid City and two in Sioux Falls. Staff from the Sioux Falls area participated in a pilot Focus Group.

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During the Focus Group meetings, the consultant learned that work was important to those who participated. Most people want a job that pays more than minimum

wage and individuals take pride in working. Some individuals hid their vision impairment from employers. Participants said they appreciated the services provided by SBVI. Older individuals were concerned with the speed of training and equipment used. The overall consensus was that there are good people working for SBVI, however, those from Rapid City voiced more concerns. Some of the issues may have to do with the limited number of employees in the Rapid City office. Participants in Sioux Falls were more likely to have participated in training at the SD Rehabilitation Center for the Blind than those in Rapid City.

The findings from the Focus Groups support the goals and strategies recommended by the Board Strategic Planning and Policy committee. Final revisions to the state plan attachments include consideration of the focus group findings.

**SBVI Logo Contest** (see front cover) - The Board of SBVI supported a logo contest for the SBVI logo. Entries were judged by the Board and the winning submission received \$50.00. The logo selected was submitted by Matt Daigle, former consumer of SBVI who has a dual sensory loss due to usher's syndrome. Mr. Daigle's submission incorporated the SBVI acronym, a hand, and an eye to represent SBVI's mission of providing services to individuals who are blind and visually impaired. The hand as the base for the logo represents SBVI's strong foundation and is the ASL sign for service, an opening above the eye represents the removal of barriers, independence and a future full of possibilities.

**Joint Activities with Other Boards and Councils** - The Board of SBVI is committed to working with other entities to promote employment and independence for citizens with disabilities. The following collaborative activities were accomplished in 2007:

**Governor's Awards for Employment of People with Disabilities** -The annual Governor's Luncheon is held to recognize the efforts of individuals, employers and organizations for their contributions to the employment of persons with disabilities. This annual event is a joint effort of the Boards of Vocational Rehabilitation, Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired and the Department of Human Services.

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**National Disability Employment Awareness Month Activities** - October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month. During October of every year, the Boards of Vocational Rehabilitation and SBVI along with the respective divisions in the Department of Human Services plan activities in communities across the state to increase awareness of the capabilities of individuals with disabilities to work. In 2007, events were held in Aberdeen, Brookings, Eagle Butte, Mitchell, Rapid City, Spearfish, Watertown, Vermillion, and Yankton. The events are often co-sponsored with local Mayor's Committees for People with Disabilities.

**"VISIONS" Newsletter** - Upon recommendation from the Board, the Division reinstated the "Visions" newsletter on a semi-annual basis. The new issues of the newsletter were circulated in January and July of 2007. The Board made recommendations on content and distribution for the newsletter.

**Telephone News Reader Service** - This service is a collaborative effort involving the Division and Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired, DakotaLink, the SD Braille and Talking Book Library, the Rapid City Journal, the Sioux Falls Argus Leader, the Aberdeen American News and consumer organizations representing people with various disabilities. During FY 2007, the number of subscribers increased from 365 to 397. Many subscribers utilize the service on a daily basis.

**Radio Talking Book Program** - The Radio Talking Book Program is available through the Division of SBVI and the Minnesota Communication Center with support from South Dakota Public Broadcasting. The program is available to individuals who are blind or visually impaired or for individuals that are not capable of reading for various reasons. Applicants receive a radio which allows them to listen to a broadcast that includes several South Dakota newspapers including the Rapid City Journal, Mitchell Daily Republic, Yankton Press and Dakotan and Aberdeen American News as well as various books and publications. This service provides individuals with the opportunity remain in touch with local communities through the newspapers and provides them with hours of leisure reading for their enjoyment. Currently there are 206 individuals who receive this free service.



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### **Consumer & Board Member Attendance at Blind Organization Conventions**

The Board of SBVI has made the commitment to financially support the cost for attendance of two consumers each year at the state conventions of the National Federation of the Blind of SD (NFB) and SD Association of the Blind (SDAB). The Board has also made the commitment to have representation from the Board at each of the blind organization state conventions. Board representatives attended the NFB and SDAB State Conventions in 2007 and reported on activities to the full Board.

**Policies and Procedures** - The Division shares all draft policies with the Board of SBVI for their input prior to implementing the policies. No formal policies were implemented in 2007.

**Future Initiatives** - Quality assurance activities will be a priority based on recommendations from the Rehabilitation Services Administration 2007 monitoring review. The Board and Division are prioritizing activities for 2008 that will ensure that quality services are delivered in the most efficient manner. The consumer satisfaction survey is being revised to better reflect the satisfaction with a variety of services and programs delivered through SBVI. Impact of services on successful outcomes will be a focus for the quality assurance plan. Validity and reliability of the survey will be ensured through technical assistance available from the SDSU Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling program.

Also based on the RSA monitoring review, the SBVI Board and Division will implement strategies with an emphasis on narrowing the gap between average hourly earnings to a level comparable to the state average hourly wage for consumers of SBVI with competitive employment outcomes. And, finally an emphasis will be placed on increasing the rehabilitation rate of transition aged consumers by implementing policies and procedures for appropriate goals, services and supports for students participating in the vocational rehabilitation program.